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The Beacon

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bea-con (bê' ken) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or inspiration.

RON'S CORNER

Goodbye Note From Under Secretary Woteki

By Catherine Woteki

Under Secretary for Food Safety

My colleagues in the Food Safety and Inspection Service:

As you know, with the change of Administrations, I am stepping down as Under Secretary for Food Safety, effective January 20, 2001.

On behalf of Deputy Under Secretary Caren Wilcox and my Office of Food Safety staff, I want to personally acknowledge your many and significant accomplishments and contributions to food safety during my 42 months service with you and to thank you for your hard work and professionalism. You are truly a talented and dedicated group of employees.

I think we will all be able to look back over our time together and reflect positively on the many successes, including HACCP implementation, furthering the agency's public health mission, strengthening the scientific basis for rule-making, educating consumers, working with industry, maintaining a strong presence in international food safety arenas, and otherwise ensuring the safety of meat, poultry, and egg products - often in the face of external adversity.

I wish you all good fortune in your future efforts to protect the nation's food supply and in your professional pursuits and personal happiness. I will continue to support a strong food safety system, and I hope our paths will cross again in the years ahead.

WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Adjusting to Change: Working Through the Transition

By Christine Sinclair

Workforce of the Future Staff

Telephone: 202-720-3845

It's been only a few weeks since our country underwent a change in administration, when George W. Bush was sworn in as the 43rd President of the United States. During the weeks prior to the inauguration, however, a Bush/Cheney transition team was put together to begin the process of "passing the baton" from one president to another, from one political party to another, and from one administration to another.

As an agency, we too have established transition teams, such as the current Workforce of the Future Steering Committee, to help implement major changes. Here are just a few examples of Agency transitions over the past several years:

- Implementation of the PR/HACCP Rule.
- Re-organization of the agency into new program areas: OM, OPHS, OPPDE, and OFO.
- Conversion of 2,700 Food Inspectors with HACCP responsibilities to Consumer Safety Inspectors.

- Introduction of the Consumer Safety Officer occupation
- Re-organization from Regional and Area Offices to District Offices.

For those of us impacted by these changes, we know that it takes time to adjust, and work through them. William Bridges, a change management guru and author of "Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes", and "Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change", explained it like this:

Change is situational - getting a new boss, being promoted, death of a person close to you. But, transition is the psychological process and response people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external, transition is internal.

So whether we are coping with a change in administration, or a change in our job, Bridges offers us a road map that takes us through this transition period, which includes an ending phase, a neutral zone, and a beginning phase.

Paradoxically, the transition starts with an "Ending" phase. Change and endings go hand in hand, since all change produces loss. Some of the emotions people experience may include shock, anger, sadness, disorientation or depression. For those of us who remember the videotape program by Ben Bissell, "Moving Through Change and Transition" this is the stage he talks about.

Once we've moved through the "ending" phase, we enter the next phase known as the "neutral zone." Marilyn Ferguson, the futurist describes it like this:

It's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear.... it's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to.

In this phase, people can be caught up in demands of conflicting systems where they are straddling both the old ways and the new ways. It's no wonder that you see some wanting to rush forward, while others are rushing to go back. If this phase lasted only a short time, you could just wait for it to pass. But when the change is deep and far reaching, the time between the old identity and the new one can stretch on for months, or even years. Many of us want to be able to move straight from the old to the new, but this isn't a trip across the street, it's a journey from one identify to another, and it takes time.

But it's worth the effort, because once you've moved through the neutral zone, you enter the third phase called "Beginnings." It is here that you are ready to make the emotional commitment to do things the new way and to actually be the new person the new situation demands.

How we handle non-stop and simultaneous changes in our personal, organizational and political worlds will depend on how well the transitions are managed. A quote from the philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, sums it up nicely: "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order."

If you have questions or concerns about change or the initiatives impacting the workforce of the future, you can contact any member of the WOF Steering Committee. Their phone and email numbers are in Outlook/Public Folders, under "Information on Workforce of the Future".

VDIP

The Conflict Resolution Process - Step 2 - Opening the Meeting*By Milo Christianson**Labor and Employee Relations Division**Telephone: 612-370-2000*

This is the second article in a series of articles dealing with a conflict resolution process that individuals can use to resolve their disagreements without the assistance of a third party intervenor. The first step in this process – Arranging the Meeting – was discussed in the January Beacon. In this issue, we will look at the second step – *Opening the Meeting*.

There are a number of things that can be done to ensure that the opening of a conflict resolution meeting is successful. They are as follows:

1. *Make Opening Comments.* Sometimes when we try to resolve a problem, we jump into the process without adequate preparation. This is particularly true when we are trying to resolve a conflict. After all, this is a stressful occasion that we just want to end as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, we will probably be unsuccessful if we don't do a few things in advance of our problem-solving discussion. Here are a few things to consider:

- Begin with some small talk to relieve tension.
- If you are the person who has called/suggested the meeting, express appreciation to the other person for coming.
- Express optimism that the meeting will result in a solution.
- State or restate the purpose of the meeting.

These may seem like small things. But it is important to remember that at this point, small things can make a big difference. It is very possible that the participants have tried unsuccessfully to solve their problems in the past. Most likely they have tried the same approach over and over, with predictable results. Trying something new gives them an opportunity to find a different, and hopefully more successful, path to resolution.

2. *Agree to Ground Rules.* A conflict resolution meeting will be a lot easier and a lot more effective if the people involved can reach a few simple agreements about how to proceed. These agreements, or ground rules, give the discussion additional structure and, in doing so, help the parties to find solutions. Here are a few ground rules that you may want to consider:

- Everyone will be given an opportunity to speak without interruption. It is critical that those involved in a conflict resolution meeting have an opportunity to express their views without interruption, since effective listening is probably the most important conflict resolution skill. In fact, many conflicts arise simply because the parties do not listen to each other and, therefore, do not understand what each is trying to say. In mediation, this rule is enforced by the mediator. In resolution meetings arranged by the parties, the parties must enforce the rule themselves.
- No one will withdraw from the conversation for a specified period of time. Conflict resolution takes time, persistence and commitment. It is not generally an easy process. The parties must agree to give it a chance, even if this means listening to things that neither may want to hear.
- Details of the conversation will remain confidential. Confidentiality is critical. The parties must feel confident that what they say will remain between them. If they do not have this confidence, it is less likely that they will raise the issues that are critical to understanding what in the relationship needs to be fixed.
- Everyone will remain open and honest. This is perhaps less of a ground rule than a philosophy. It is important in conflict resolution that as many issues as possible rise to the surface. Unless they do, it is likely that some problems will continue to fester simply because they aren't addressed.
- Opinion and feelings will be supported by facts and examples. It is important that a person understand, to the extent possible, why another person holds a particular opinion or feeling. Conversely, it is also an excellent mental exercise for the person who holds a particular opinion or feeling to get a better understanding of why that opinion is held.

3. *Decide Who Speaks First.*

This is another small, but important, step in the opening of the meeting. Perhaps the person arranging the meeting can let the other person speak first. This might be a change from the previous arrangement that did not produce results and, as noted above, such change can have an impact on how the parties view the possibilities of success.

4. *Identify the Issues.*

Identifying the issues that need to be addressed is one of the most important, and sometimes most difficult, steps in the conflict resolution process. To identify the issue(s), do the following: (1) State them from your perspective and invite the other person to do the same (or, if you are the intervening party, invite the others to state the issues from their perspective). (2) If possible, eliminate disagreements that do not require further discussion. (3) Make certain that each party has a similar understanding of the issues to be resolved. It is important to remember that the issues may change as the resolution process proceeds. Some may be added, and others dropped. This is normal, since the conversations that occur in Step 3 of the process will often reveal issues that the parties did not think of earlier. Again, one of the objectives of effective conflict resolution is to get as much as possible out on the table so that resolution has a chance to succeed.

Getting the conflict resolution meeting off to a good start is critical for later success. In the next issue of the Beacon, we will discuss Step 3 of the conflict resolution process – *Discussing the Issues*.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Slips, Trips, and Falls Can Be Trouble

By Harry Thompson

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The average person takes 18,000 steps every day, but how many of these steps are taken seriously? There are over 13 million slip, trip, and fall injuries every year that can result in lost workdays, broken bones, "bad backs," and even permanent disability. By understanding how slips, trips and falls happen, you can prevent painful injuries both on and off the job.

Slips are a loss of balance caused by too little friction between your feet and the surface you work on or walk on. Constantly wet surfaces, occasional spills or weather hazards such as ice or snow can cause slips. Walking carelessly, ignoring occasional spills, and wearing shoes without adequate traction for the surface can cause painful slip injuries at work and at home.

Trips are a loss of balance caused by interference between your forward motion and some object. Taking short cuts, leaving clutter in walkways, working under poor lighting, and walking on loose, uneven footing are common causes of trips. Trips are as likely to occur from these hazards at home as on the job.

Falls are caused whenever you move too far off your center of balance. Think of it this way: when you fall, gravity pulls you from one unstable position to a second, more stable position. Makeshift ladders, reaching too far up or to the side while on a ladder, and ladders set up on loose, uneven ground are common fall hazards. A slip or trip, as well, often ends in a painful fall.

Preventing Slips

Slips can occur wherever there is too little friction between your feet and the surface you work or walk on. Walking itself requires considerable balance, since your heel must keep you balanced until the rest of your foot lands on the floor. The most common causes of slips are constantly wet surfaces, occasional spills, and weather hazards. As with trips and falls, slips are more likely when you hurry and are inattentive or distracted. Work with your supervisor, coworkers, and family to recognize, avoid, and control slip hazards wherever they occur.

Preventing Trips

Trips can occur whenever your foot strikes an object and you are moving with sufficient momentum to be thrown off balance. Trips most often occur when you try to take a short cut, when lighting is inadequate and the work area is cluttered, and when an area has loose footing. Like slips and falls, trips are more likely when you hurry and don't pay attention to where you are going. By learning to recognize, avoid, and control trip hazards both at home and on the job, you and your coworkers can work together to prevent painful and needless injuries.

Preventing Falls

Falls occur whenever you move too far off your center of balance. Slips and trips often push you off your center of balance far enough to cause a fall, but here are many other ways to fall. Makeshift ladders, misuse of ladders and inadequate equipment for a job are the most common causes of falls. As with slips and trips, hurrying and being distracted often contribute to a fall. Begin to recognize and avoid potential fall hazards on the job, and work with your supervisor to control the hazards that you see.

Slip-Resistant Shoes

One of the best ways to help prevent slip, trip, and fall injuries is to increase the friction between your shoe and the surfaces you work and walk on. The amount of friction a sole provides varies with the work surface and its typical conditions (wet, dry, or greasy). FSIS Directive 3410.3, Rev. 4, 12/11/98, "Reimbursement Provisions for Inspection Expenditures", provides reimbursement policy for skid-resistant shoes.

Make Prevention A Priority

Slip, trip, and fall hazards are everywhere. Don't let yourself become one of the people each year who are injured by needlessly slipping, tripping, or falling. Begin today to work with your supervisor and coworkers to recognize, avoid, and control potential hazards. Help make your workplace safe for everyone. FSIS Directive 4791.12, "Reporting and Correcting Occupational Hazards", provides procedures for reporting and correcting hazardous working conditions.

VEHICLES

Accidents: Reporting and Responsibility

By Brian McNiff

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4221

All employees driving General Services Administration (GSA) Fleet vehicles shall exercise every precaution to prevent accidents. With the continuous increase in the number of government vehicles being assigned to our agency, the number of chargeable accidents continues to increase. All accidents that are the fault of the employee result in our agency paying all costs for repair or replacement of the government vehicle. Driver awareness and the execution of caution while driving the government vehicle could prevent many of these accidents. Government employees acting within the scope of their employment are protected against third party claims by Federal Tort Claims Legislation, (PL87-25-8). In case of a vehicle accident, the driver is required to follow these procedures:

1. Regardless of how minor the damage or who is at fault, you should attempt to get a police officer to investigate the accident. A police report is the single most important document in an accident case file.
2. Do not admit fault to anyone, not even the investigating officer. An admission of fault may reduce or eliminate any chance GSA has of recovering the cost of repairing the Government vehicle.
3. Obtain the name, address, phone number and insurance data from all parties involved and record the information on the SF-91 (Motor Vehicle Accident Report).
4. Get witness statements if available.
5. Obtain a copy of the police report.
6. Immediately following the accident, the driver must take the following action:
 - Notify the servicing FMC of the accident and condition of the government vehicle.
 - Notify your supervisor.
 - Complete SF-91 and forward copy to servicing FMC and original copy to:
USDA, FSIS, ASD
Attn: Brian McNiff
5601 Sunnyside Ave.
Beltsville, MD. 20705-5230

This should be done within 48 hours of the accident.

7. The driver should list this office as the point of contact for submitting claims and should provide the SF-95 (Claim For Damage, Injury, Or Death) to the third party, if requested.

The driver may give the following number to claimant for information on how to file a claim:
301-504-4221.

"Dial-A-Mile" - Reporting Monthly Mileage

All personnel driving government vehicles are required to report their monthly mileage to GSA by the last day of the month. GSA has requested that all mileage be reported electronically starting next month. The GSA Form 494 postcard method of reporting mileage is being discontinued and drivers will no longer receive these in the mail. GSA requests all mileage now be reported by telephone using the "Dial-A-Mile" system. Dialing the toll free number can access this system simply. The number is 1-877-472-3773. The only information you'll need to provide will be the tag number of your vehicle, the current mileage and your four digit access number. Your access number consists of one alpha and three numeric digits. If you do not know your access code you should contact your servicing GSA Fleet Management Center (FMC) and they will provide you with this information. Several of our drivers who have been using this system for months report that they are pleased with this new means of mileage reporting. We are asking those who have not done so, to start using this method of reporting mileage this month. Drivers will also be notified directly of this new reporting procedure. The reporting of mileage is mandatory, and essential to having an effective billing process for the GSA-leased vehicles.

SUPPLIES

Move of Field Supply Center - Address Change*by Pete Bridgeman**Administrative Services Division**Telephone: 301-504-4222*

The move of the Field Supply Center (FSC) from Landover to Beltsville has incurred yet another delay, and is now scheduled to take place during the month of February 2001. In addition, the new address for the FSC has been changed, as follows:

USDA, FSIS, FIELD SUPPLY CENTER (FSC)
6351 AMMENDALE ROAD
BELTSVILLE, MD 20705

Any orders sent to either the Landover address, or the 11711 Maryland Avenue East address previously published, will get to the Field Supply Center, but all mailings from this point on should be sent to the address listed above.

January and February are typically our busiest months of the year - these delays haven't helped. Landover did the best job they could in being prepared for this move, but there was no way to foresee the problems that have delayed the move. The warehouse was all packed up and ready to move, and they have literally been working out of boxes since November to keep up with all of the field orders. Please bear with them as they go through this transition - they'll do their best to meet your needs in a timely and efficient manner.

Once the move is completed and everything is settled in the new location, we will publish the revised catalogue, and bring on Electronic Ordering. We apologize for the delays, and for the address confusion. The toll-free number for emergency supply orders and inquiries will remain 1-800-714-8335.

Government Postage Stamps

The new standard First Class postage rate of 34 cents went into effect 1/7/01, as reported in the January issue of the Beacon. We are hoping to get the new First Class rate Government Postage stamps into the FSC by the end of February. The Item Number for these will remain FSIS-17A. The FSC has been instructed to send out 1-Cent Stamps along with the 33-cent stamps on any orders for FSIS-17 until the new 34-cent stamps come in. In the meantime, the Post Office has run out of the 33-cent government postage stamps, and so will the FSC by early February, most likely before we get the new 34-cent stamps in. When this occurs, the FSC will send out a sheet of 23-cent stamps, a sheet of 10-cent stamps, and a sheet of 1-cent stamps for any orders for First Class Postage Stamps (FSIS-17A), just until the 34-cent stamps come in. As soon as the 34-cent stamps come in, we will begin to issue them on all orders for the FSIS-17A.

We've been asked why we don't provide self-sticking postage stamps. We would like to. However, the Post Office does not print the Official Government Postage on self-sticking Stamps, so we are stuck with the "lick 'em, stick 'em".

We do provide a plastic stamp dispenser for use with the first class postage stamps, which are the only ones that come in a roll. The Item Number for the Plastic Dispenser is FSIS-65.

New Pictures of the President and Secretary of Agriculture

Several offices have asked where they can get pictures of President Bush and Secretary Veneman.

The new pictures aren't available yet. It is usually a couple of months before they are available. The pictures can be ordered as Form Number AD-836 (President, 20" x 24"), AD-836A (President, 11" x 14"), AD-840 (Secretary, 20" x 24") or AD-840A (Secretary, 11" x 14"), from the Field Supply Center once they do become available. We will let you know when they are.

The pictures of the former President and Secretary should be taken down until they can be replaced by the new pictures. Save the frames to put the new pictures in.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Attention Parents and Guardians—An Important Child Care Subsidy and Leave for Parent/Teacher Conferences Questionnaire

*By the Performance, Evaluation and Recognition Branch
Telephone: 202-720-7983*

If you are paying costs to a child care provider, you will be glad to know that the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is looking at the issue of a child care subsidy for employees. Recognizing that Federal families are more challenged than ever before to meet the cost of child care expenses, the Fiscal Year 2001 Treasury Postal Appropriations Bill and OPM regulations passed last year give Federal agencies the authority to subsidize the cost of lower income Federal employees' child care expenses.

The Department, on behalf of its agencies, is evaluating the potential use of this authority in USDA and is asking for your help in determining how many employees have a need for childcare and how many employees may need financial assistance for this purpose. USDA is asking you to complete the questionnaire attached to this month's issue (Attachment 2), if you are a parent, foster parent or guardian and have to pay for child care from a State licensed program such as a day care center, family day care or after school program or from some other source.

In addition to gathering information on the childcare subsidy, the USDA is also soliciting information from you to determine whether there are any leave-related barriers preventing you from attending parent/teacher conferences for your children to assess whether it should consider any modifications to current leave provisions.

So if you are a parent or guardian, take a moment to complete the attached questionnaire (Attachment 2) either by mail or via the Internet as indicated below:

Mail completed questionnaires to the following address:

USDA/OHRM/SHEW
Room 3027-South Building
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9600

Or if you prefer, complete the questionnaire on the Internet at the following website address:

<http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/childcare.htm>

A child care subsidy may be largely dependent on individual agency budgetary situations. However, we do hope you will take the time to complete this questionnaire that will help USDA and FSIS better assess your child care needs.

Pay Setting Changes*By Employment Policy and Services Branch**Telephone: 202-720-5362*

Significant changes have occurred in the method of setting pay when an employee reverts to their lower grade following a temporary promotion, or a voluntary change to lower grade while serving permanently in a higher grade. This concerns the use of "highest previous rate" where the employee's rate of pay in the lower grade is matched, as near as possible, to the pay received in the higher grade. The rate of pay in the lower grade cannot exceed step 10. Effective with personnel actions after December 27, 2000, service of one year or longer on a temporary promotion will result in the pay rate in the lower grade being set based on the rate received in the higher grade. In other words, service of one year or longer on a temporary promotion will be used as "highest previous rate".

Service of 6 months or longer on a permanent promotion will be used as "highest previous rate". Previously, one year of service was required at the higher grade on a permanent promotion before this pay rate could be used in setting the pay at the lower grade.

Another change concerns employees who take a voluntary change to lower grade with the prospects of repromotion to their former grade (or beyond). In some cases, employees had to take a pay cut when accepting a job under these circumstances. The new pay setting policy allows use of "highest previous rate" for those who voluntarily drop in grade with the likelihood of repromotion to their former grade. The time requirements, stated above, must be met.

These changes in pay setting policy are effective for changes to lower grade after December 27, 2000, and are not retroactive. For additional information, refer to FSIS Directive 4530.3, Revision 2, "Salary Rate Determinations for General Schedule Employees", dated 12/27/00. Questions should be directed to the Employment Policy and Services Branch, Human Resources Division, on (202) 720-5362.

Automated Recruitment is coming to FSIS

Have you ever dreamed of a one-stop website location where you could find all the FSIS vacancies, apply on-line, and receive quick e-mail communications on the status of your application? If you are a manager, have you dreamed of receiving certificates of best qualified candidates electronically along with their full electronic applications within a few days after the vacancy announcement closes? Well the folks in HRD have also been wishing for these capabilities, and it looks like the dreams are about to become reality!! HRD is preparing to carry out two pilot projects to test a new fully automated process for recruitment.

One pilot will use technology developed by QuickHire, Inc. During this one year pilot, the QuickHire system will be used to fill the following positions: GS-318 Secretary, GS-334 Computer Specialist, GS-343 Management and Program Analyst, GS-260 Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist, GS-344 Management Assistant, GS-601 Health Science Administration, GS-1035 Public Affairs Specialist, and GS-1801-12/13 Compliance Officer. Also under consideration for inclusion in the pilot is either the GS-403 Microbiologist or GS-1320 Chemist series. The testing will include vacancies advertised as open only to Federal candidates through merit staffing, and also those positions open to the general public which use delegated examining procedures to determine the best qualified candidates.

Another one-year pilot will use the Office of Personnel Management's new USAStaffing system to fill new hire GS-701 Veterinary Medical Officer positions at grades GS-9 and GS-11. These positions have traditionally been filled from a standing register administered by HRFO in Minneapolis.

The job series covered in the two pilot projects cover a majority of the non-inspector positions in FSIS. HRD hopes to have the first group of vacancies covering the GS-318 and -334 series announced by early April and to have the rest ready by early June. Look for more information on these two pilot projects in upcoming editions of The Beacon and via other communications to all FSIS employees. When the pilot "goes live," Internet access will most likely be through the FSIS and HRD homepages, as well as through the www.USAJOBS.opm.gov location.

These job series included in the two pilots cover over 30% of all FSIS positions and represent all major Agency program areas and a comprehensive variety of job types.

Clerical and Administrative Support Program (CASP)*By Nancy Bellony**Human Resources Division**Telephone: 202-720-4937*

FSIS is pleased to announce a state-of-the-art training opportunity for administrative and professional office staff. Entitled the Clerical and Administrative Support Program (CASP), this new training initiative will assist participants to acquire and improve a variety of skills necessary for professional and personal effectiveness. The goal of CASP is to produce a well-rounded employee capable of handling the various demands of the modern office. CASP is being launched under the auspices of the Management and Leadership Development Program.

Classes are built around core competencies and focus on developmental activities necessary to improve present performance and strengthen future learning capacity. The wide-ranging curriculum includes team building; writing, editing and proofreading; projecting a positive attitude; interpersonal skills; customer service; managing conflict; problem solving; and stress management.

CASP also features structured opportunities for participants to gain deeper self-awareness. Included are multi-source assessment through the Leadership Effectiveness Inventory, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Special effort is made throughout the program to closely link classroom learning with on the job application.

CASP will ultimately be offered non-competitively to grade 3-8 clerical and administrative employees throughout the agency. The first class, however, is limited to 25 headquarters participants. Please stay tuned for information on how to apply. For further information please call Nancy Bellony at 202-720-4937.

A Way to Get Home*By the Performance, Evaluation and Recognition Branch**Telephone: 202-720-7983*

Are you a commuter whose vanpool had to leave without you because you were in an important meeting that you just couldn't leave? Did your carpool driver call you this morning and tell you he would like to work an hour late tonight to finish a critical project, and since you were the only two riding that day, would you mind staying late, too? (Unfortunately, he didn't know you had an evening dental appointment and had to get home in time to make it.) Did your child's school contact you and tell you your son had a fever and he had to be picked up as soon as possible? These situations are just a few, among many others, where you might find yourself in need of an alternate way home.

The "*Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH)*" program is a program sponsored by the non-profit Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments through *Commuter Connections* and is dedicated to the needs of commuters in the greater Washington area. (These programs may be available in other metropolitan areas as well; contact your local Council of Governments to see if a similar program exists in your metropolitan location, look in the phone book under the travel and tourism section related to "getting around" for any special "ride networks" in your city.)

The *Commuter Connections'* "GRH" program, guarantees a ride home to commuters who usually carpool, vanpool, bike, walk or take mass transit to their workplace. It provides a reliable ride home at any time, when unpredictable personal emergencies and unscheduled overtime occur. The "GRH" program is available for use by commuters up to four times a year and the best part is that the program is free!! This is true whether the needed ride home is by taxi, rental car, bus or train.

If you have a family or personal emergency, the "GRH" Program will provide you a ride home so that you can consider using commuting options such as transit and carpools that you might have dismissed before. "GRH" allows you to use these forms of mass transportation without worrying what you would do if a personal emergency occurred, to get all the way home (e.g., you may carpool to metro or the train station; "GRH" will help you get all the way home).

To be eligible for the "GRH" program you must use one of the following alternative commute modes to get to work:

- Rideshare (carpools or vanpools)
- Mass transit (bus, train)
- Bicycle
- Walk

You must also register for the "GRH" with *Commuter Connections*, work in the Washington metropolitan area as defined by the *Metropolitan Statistical Area for Washington, DC*, and live in one of the areas approved by *Commuter Connections*. If you meet the criteria and are interested in registering, please call 1-800-745 Ride (7433) or check the *Commuter Connections* website at <http://www.commuterconnections.org>. While you may still use "GRH" one time if an emergency occurs before you are registered officially, it may pay for you to check out whether this option is a good thing to have available longer term.

Leave Transfer Recipients

1. Jackie Copeland
OFO, DC; Illness
 2. Annie Stewart
POB, MN; Serious Illness
 3. Linda Cole
OPPDE, DC; Serious Illness
 4. Stephanie Showell
OFO, DE; Family Illness
 5. Linda Carey
EMS, DC; Surgery
 6. Betty Morgan
OFO, AR; Family Illness
 7. Carolyn Woolfolk
OFO, DC; Family Illness
 8. OFO-99-0027*
OFO, NC, Surgery
 9. Tammy Love
OFO, AR; Surgery
 10. Sue Engels
OFO, IA; Family Illness
 11. Aurbrey Tribble
OFO, FL; Serious Illness
 12. Jacqueline Bonner
OFO, AL; Surgery
 13. John French
OFO, GA; Family Illness
 14. Clement Grangier
OFO, MD; Serious Illness
 15. OFO-00-0006*
OFO, AL, Illness
 16. Randy Haggard
OFO, TX; Serious illness
 17. Robert Butler
OFO, MS; Surgery
 18. Ralph Bowen
OFO, NE; Serious Illness
 19. Eusebio Galindo
OFO, TX; Serious Illness
 20. Becky Schneider
OFO, CO; Illness
 21. OFO-00-0030*
OFO, WV; Surgery
 22. OFO-00-0034
OFO, NJ; Surgery
 23. Jerry Castleberry
OFO, GA; Surgery
 24. Beverly Winston
OFO, GA; Maternity
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25. OFO-00-0036*
OFO, SC; Surgery
26. Barbara Males
OFO, NY; Serious Illness
27. Donald Palmer
OFO, KS; Family Illness
28. OFO-00- 0042*
OFO, AL; Surgery
29. Leslie Buzzell
OFO, ME; Surgery
30. Stephanie Kane
OPPDE, DC; Surgery
31. Lula Wallace
OPPDE, DC; Maternity
32. Margarita Fiol
OFO, PR; Illness
33. Michelle Furchak
OM, DC; Family Illness
34. Lois Mullens
OFO, AL; Serious Illness
35. Dolores Bradley-Vargas
OFO, GA; Serious Illness
36. Janet O'Byrne
OFO, MN; Serious Illness
37. George Touns
OFO, LA; Serious Illness
38. Kelly Mitchell
OFO, DC; Serious Illness
39. Tammy Bergerson
OFO; MO; Surgery
40. Rosie Stephenson
OFO, TX; Serious Illness
41. Geraldine Woods
OFO; TX; Surgery
42. Sheila Mote
OFO; NC; Surgery
43. Wilma Hoch
OFO, IA; Surgery
44. Frances Flecher
OFO, MN; Surgery
45. Wynne Molloy
OFO, AR; Serious Illness
46. Linda Reohr
OFO, NY; Surgery
47. Linda Kendrick
OFO, AR; Surgery
48. Sandra Wasserman
OM, MN; Serious Illness
49. Steven Casey
OFO, WA; Serious Illness
50. Timothy Trogdon
OFO, PA; Family Illness
51. Melanie Norman
OFO, TX; Serious Illness

*While not consenting to the publication of their names, certain LTP recipients are assigned a number that they may provide to their co-workers if they choose so that donated leave may be transferred to their account. Any questions on the LTP

should be referred to the Human Resources Field Office on 1-800-370-3747 for field employees and to the Classification and Compensation Branch for HQ employees on 202-720-6287.

Thank You, From a Recipient

This is but one example of where the leave transfer program has helped someone in need. Our thanks to all who have donated under this program to help a colleague:

If there is anyway that a short note could be placed in the Beacon to thank those who donated leave to me last year, I would like to express my thanks.

I nearly lost my wife due to liver and kidney failure. She received a liver and kidney transplant at the last minute. Without the leave transfer program, it would have been very difficult for me to be by her side during the 62 days she spent in intensive care, and the many other days being hospitalized. I do not know the names of all who donated leave, but I would like to say a sincere "Thank You" to each and every one. It warms the heart to know that there are people who are willing to help. Thank You.

John French

December/January Retirements

Shelton W. Adams, CSI, OFO, Orlando, FL, 12/30/00, 33 Years
Edward Androlones, CSI, OFO, Manchester, CT, 12/30/00, 22 Years
Rodger D. Atkins, VMO, OFO, College Station, TX, 12/30/00, 30 Years
Roberta S. Ayers, Financial Mgmt Specialist, OM, Wash D. C., 01/01/01, 21 Years
Lester G. Barto, SVMO, OFO, Mentone, IN, 12/30/00, 30 Years
Walter B. Benton, CSI, OFO, Tulsa, OK, 12/29/00, 32 Years
Brandy Blevins, FI(S), OFO, Merced, CA, 12/16/00, 9 Years
Henry D. Brogdon, CSI, OFO, Live Oak, FL, 12/29/00, 30 Years
Daniel T. Brooking, Mgmt. Analyst, OM, Beltsville, MD, 12/29/00, 39 Years
James L. Brookshire, CSI, OFO, Windsor, CO, 12/30/00, 36 Years
Randy A. Brown, CSI, OFO, Edina, MN, 12/29/00, 32 Years
Tamhira J. Brown, FI(S), OFO, Jay, OK, 12/30/00, 3 Years
George F. Bucsek, CSI, OFO, Saxonburg, PA, 01/02/01, 30 Years
James E. Carpenter, VMO, OFO, Washington, OK, 12/29/00, 9 Years
Wayne V. Carter, CSI, OFO, Marshville, NC, 12/30/00, 34 Years
Dewey R. Chafin, CSI, OFO, Jonesboro, TN, 01/03/01, 32 Years
Milton S. Chesser, CSI, OFO, Savannah, GA, 12/29/00, 32 Years
Allen Christison, FI(S), OFO, Louisville, KY, 01/13/01, 12 Years
Charles L. Colburn, Chemist, OPHS, St. Louis, MO, 01/03/01, 38 Years
William R. Currier, CSI, OFO, Pascoag, RI, 12/30/00, 20 Years
Donald H. Delozier, Jr., Food Tech, OFO, Omaha, NE, 01/03/01, 34 Years
Denis V. Donovan, CSI, OFO, Monmouth, IL, 12/29/00, 36 Years
Robert L. Donovan, SVMO, OFO, North Canton, OH, 12/30/00, 39 Years
Samuel W. Eisentrout, CSI, OFO, Dogue, VA, 12/30/00, 36 Years
Charles W. Ellis, Jr., Supry Food Tech, OFO, Pittson, PA, 01/01/01, 28 Years
Charles W. Gabrielson, CSI, OFO, Littlestown, PA, 12/30/00, 41 Years
Albert K. Gottfried, VMO, OFO, New Holland, PA, 01/02/01, 30 Years
Eugene G. Gunderson, CSI, OFO, Arcadia, WI, 12/29/00, 43 Years
Herman L. Hall, FI(PP), OFO, Philadelphia, PA, 12/30/00, 35 Years
Eleanor A. Halverstadt, Supv Compl Officer, OFO, Urbandale, IA, 12/30/00, 29 Years
Kenneth B. Harris, Program Analyst, OPPDE, Washington, D.C., 01/03/01, 33 Years
Anna Hasinsky, Printing Clerk, OM, Beltsville, MD, 01/03/01, 30 Years
Clarence Hayes, Jr., CSI, OFO, Chicago, IL, 12/30/00, 31 Years
J. Frederick Hensley, SVMO, Tampa, FL, 01/03/01, 33 Years
Earnest L. Hendrix, SVMO, San Antonio, TX, 12/29/00, 41 Years

Loida S. Hernandez, SVMO, Miami, FL, 12/30/00, 35 Years
Ellis L. Jones, District Manager, Pickerington, OH, 12/30/00, 37 Years
Marvin L. Jorgensen, CSI, Berryville, AR, 12/29/00, 37 Years
Robert A. Kates, CSI, Lakeland, FL, 12/30/00, 31 Years
Richard L. Killens, SVMO, Mount Olive, NC, 12/30/00, 26 Years
George R. Klossing, CSI, OFO, Paris, TN, 12/30/00, 39 Years
Mavis J. Koethe, FI(S), OFO, Cold Spring, MN, 12/30/00, 27 Years
Phyllis E. Krull, Pers Mgmt Specialist, OM, Minneapolis, MN, 12/30/00, 19 Years
Larry E. Lieb, CSI, OFO, Little Rock, AR, 12/30/00, 30 Years
Harold W. Martin, Circuit Supr, OFO, Columbia, MO, 12/30/00, 44 Years
Francis L. McCord, CSI, OFO, Crete, NE, 12/30/00, 40 Years
Robert W. McGowen, CSI, OFO, Henderson, TX, 12/29/00, 33 Years
Brajendra N. Mishra, VMO, OFO, Springfield, MO, 12/30/00, 10 Years
Pearlie T. Moore, Jr., CSI, OFO, Portsmouth, VA, 12/30/00, 42 Years
Budi S. Nara, SVMO, OFO, North Aurora, IL, 12/30/00, 14 Years
Rudolph N. Newsom, CSI, OFO, N. Richland Hills, TX, 12/30/00, 30 Years
Michael F. Nicosia, CSI, OFO, Tuscaloosa, AL, 12/29/00, 39 Years
Kenneth J. Rabben, Public Affairs Specialist, OFO, Wash D. C., 12/30/00, 20 Years
Patricia A. Rebuck, FI, OFO, Souderton, PA, 12/30/00, 10 Years
Medhat A. Rizk, SVMO, OFO, Milwaukee, WI, 01/03/01, 32 Years
Antonio O. Salazar, CSI, OFO, Beaumont, TX, 12/30/00, 26 Years
Raymond H. Scheffler, Jr., FI, OFO, Niagra Falls, NY, 12/30/00, 27 Years
Cordell H. Schilmoeller, District Manager, OFO, Springdale, AR, 01/03/01, 36 Years
Betsy H. Sharp, Admin Offcr, OFO, St. Louis, MO, 12/30/00, 14 Years
Louis G. Skufe, HAACP Implem Proj Mgr, OFO, Wash D.C., 12/30/00, 38 Years
Frederick M. Smith, FI(S), OFO, Hammond, LA, 12/29/00, 23 Years
John C. Stephenson, SVMO, OFO, Wyoming, MI, 01/03/01, 19 Years
Stephen L. Stephenson, Circuit Supv, OFO, Amarillo, TX, 12/02/00, 12 Years
Larry J. Taffar, CSI, OFO, Gainesville, GA, 01/03/01, 42 Years
Johannes A.E. Vandevyver, FI(S), OFO, Nacogdoches, TX, 12/30/00, 20 Years
Joseph Veloria, SVMO, OFO, West Haven, CT, 12/30/00, 25 Years
Josephine G. Venable, CSI, OFO, Lakeland, FL, 12/30/00, 26 Years
Theressa S. Waters, Secy OA, OFO, Raleigh, NC, 12/30/00, 23 Years
Samuel T. Watson, SVMO, OFO, Douglas, GA, 01/03/01, 36 Years
Robert L. Wellens, CSI, OFO, Green Bay, WI, 12/30/00, 43 Years
Bradley A. Wilson, CSI, OFO, Osakis, MN, 12/30/00, 35 Years
George G. Young, Supvy Food Tech, OFO, Portland, OR, 12/30/00, 36 Years

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

EAP Counseling on Outlook: Help Is at Your Fingertips !

By Roslyn Robinson

Labor and Employee Relations Division

Telephone: 202-720-5657

Information on the Agency's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and counseling advice is now available on the FSIS Outlook system. This self-help guide can be accessed from the Public Folders, and found in the Personnel Public Folder.

All users are encouraged to open the file. Personal problems are a part of life, and seeking assistance can be the first step toward resolving issues. Aside from the information on dealing with personal, family, and job related concerns, the site also addresses, but is not limited to, strategies for handling:

- Commuter stress
- Effective supervision
- Legal problems
- AIDS concerns

- Anger management and grief
- Managing change

If you need more information on the EAP, please contact me at the above listed telephone number.

RESIDUE SAMPLING

National Residue Program—Uniform Application in Cull Cow Plants

*By Edie Kelly, Program Analyst, and
Barb Masters, Director of SOS
Technical Service Center
Telephone: 402-221-7400*

The Agency's Technical Service Center (TSC) recently completed a national study of the uniformity of application of our National Residue Program in cull cow plants. The project objectives were to:

- Ensure FSIS personnel are following Agency regulations, policies and procedures for residue prevention and control;
- Examine whether in-plant personnel have the tools they need to complete residue sampling responsibilities; and
- Assess effectiveness of current pathology/residue correlation efforts by the TSC.

Methodology

The TSC used a combination of data analysis and on-site visits in conducting the study. Teams consisting of one TSC Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) and one field VMO visited 30 plants randomly selected from the top 40 cull cow plants in the nation. The plants ran the gamut in size, with slaughter rates ranging from 120 to 1900 cows per day.

Results

Overall, the national residue program is working to ensure meat is well within the residue safety standards. However, the project results indicate we need to improve our uniformity in following Agency regulations, policies and procedures on residue testing. The survey results found some inconsistencies in (a) how carcasses are selected for sampling; and (b) how in-plant screening tests are conducted. The project also found that:

- Inspection personnel have the majority of tools necessary to perform residue work (with the exception of labor and space); and
- Inspection personnel who have attended TSC correlation sessions are more likely to follow Agency regulations, policies and procedures in a uniform and consistent manner.

Actions to improve national uniformity

The TSC analyzed the information collected during the project to develop recommendations for improving the uniformity of application of National Residue Program requirements for cull cows. The areas for improvement, the specific recommendations, and the status of implementation for each recommendation are described below.

1. Staffing

Continue on-going Agency efforts to fill vacancies, and restructure/reprioritize VMO assignments and allow more time for food safety work including residues. Status: Many work groups are currently considering options to accomplish this objective.

2. Training and Correlation

a. Incorporate residues into the Basic Livestock Inspection Course and dedicate additional time to residues in the VMO Livestock Training course. Status: Both have now been accomplished.

b. Institute an on-line "case of the month" on the TSC web site to provide examples to field VMOs. Status: Scheduled to begin in spring 2001

c. Conduct in-plant correlation sessions in the establishments that slaughter 99% of all cull cows. Status: Sessions will begin in January 2001.

d. In conjunction with the correlations, develop resource materials for VMOs to utilize for training on-line inspection personnel. Status: Will be provided during in-plant correlation sessions.

3. HACCP/Enforcement

a. Clarify Agency and industry roles. Status: FSIS sponsored a public meeting on December 11, 2000, to address residue control in a HACCP environment. The Agency has also indicated that in 2001 it expects to update FSIS regulations to be consistent with FDA regulations on the unacceptability of animals with violative residues.

b. Consider residues as part of In-depth Verification Reviews (IDV's) in slaughter establishments. Status: On-going.

4. Availability of Residue Information to Field Employees

a. Re-emphasize instructions to the field for those carcasses that should be residue-tested and include a CD with color photographs of conditions considered to be high risk. Status: Work on fulfilling this recommendation is in progress.

b. Ensure information on producers with repeat residue violations is available to field inspection personnel. (FSIS also plans to make this information available to plants that slaughter animals so they can use this information in making purchasing decisions.) Status: The Agency is finalizing plans to begin this process.

5. In-Plant Procedures

a. Ensure inspection personnel raise concerns about equipment to a central point. Status: TSC is currently conducting a residue equipment needs survey of all livestock slaughter plants. About 330 incubators have been purchased to replace aging equipment.

b. Clarify existing policies that were not uniformly applied. Status: OPPDE is currently drafting instructions to the field on such issues as roles of inspection personnel, retention of carcasses, and sample security.

6. Laboratory Issues

a. Improve communications by utilizing electronic transmission of lab results. Status: A work group is in progress.

b. Develop a video-tape to provide information on lab procedures at TSC correlation sessions. Status: Taping is scheduled for early next spring to capture "A Day in the Life of a Residue Sample."

As a result of the project, we have already seen an increase in residue awareness among field employees and supervisors. Many of the ensuing recommendations have already been implemented, and additional recommendations are "in progress." FSIS is dedicated to improving the overall uniformity of residue sampling in cull cow plants.

ISSUANCES

Recent Agency Issuances

By Corinne Calhoun

Administrative Services Division

Telephone: 301-504-4233

The following notices and directives have been issued since the January 2001 edition of The Beacon. Many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" library in Opendesk and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

Notice 1-01 (1/4/01)

Travel Reservation Procedures for Certain Field Employees

Notice 2-01 (1/9/01)

Expanded Use of Sick Leave

Notice 3-01 (1/17/01)

Sampling Notification

Notice 4-01 (1/19/01)

Workplace Violence Policy Statement

Directive 2780.1 (1/18/01)
Environmental Management at FSIS Facilities

Directive 4530.3, Revision 2 (12/27/00)
Salary Rate Determinations for General Schedule Employees

Directives and notices are distributed automatically to applicable Agency employees and offices. Additional copies are available from:

USDA FSIS ASD PMS
MAILDROP 5241
5601 SUNNYSIDE AVENUE
BELTSVILLE MD 20705-5241

TEL (301) 504-4242
FAX (301) 504-4277

To comment on this newsletter or to submit an article for publication, please contact:

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The current and past editions of *The Beacon* are available electronically in the "Newsletters" public folder on the Exchange (Outlook) mail system as well as on the FSIS Website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm

Attachment 1

**Thrift Savings Plan
C, F, and G Fund Monthly Returns
January 8, 2001**

Months	C Fund	S&P 500 Stock Index	F Fund	Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate Bond Index	G Fund
1996 (Jan. - Dec.)	22.85%	22.96%	3.66%	3.63%	6.76%
1997 (Jan. - Dec.)	33.17%	33.36%	9.60%	9.65%	6.77%
1998 (Jan. - Dec.)	28.44%	28.58%	8.70%	8.69%	5.74%
1999 (Jan. - Dec.)	20.95%	21.04%	(0.85%)	(0.82%)	5.99%
2000 (Jan. - Dec.)	(9.14)%	(9.10)%	11.67%	11.63%	6.42%
	%	%	%	%	%
2000					
January	(5.03)	(5.02)	(0.34)	(0.33)	.56
February	(1.93)	(1.89)	1.22	1.21	.53
March	9.74	9.78	1.32	1.32	.55
April	(2.98)	(3.01)	(0.29)	(0.29)	.52
May	(2.05)	(2.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	.54
June	2.44	2.47	2.07	2.08	.53
July	(1.56)	(1.56)	0.89	0.91	.53
August	6.19	6.21	1.46	.145	.52
September	(5.27)	(5.28)	.64	.63	.49
October	(0.40)	(0.42)	.66	.66	.51
November	(7.87)	(7.88)	1.65	1.64	.48
December	0.50	0.49	1.86	1.86	.48
Last 12 Months *	(9.14)	(9.10)	11.67	11.63	6.42

Percentages in () are negative.

The C Fund is invested in the Barclays Equity Index Fund, which tracks the S&P 500 stock index. The F Fund is invested in the Barclays U.S. Debt Index Fund, which tracks the Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate bond index. The G Fund is invested in special issues of U.S. Treasury securities.

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent net earnings for the month, after deduction of accrued administrative expenses. The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The C, F, and G Fund monthly returns are dollar-weighted: they reflect net earnings on the changing balances invested during the month.

* The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

The C and F Fund returns vary from the index returns because of C and F Fund expenses, changing balances in the C and F Funds, and differences in returns between the Barclays funds and the underlying indexes. The index returns are time-weighted: they assume constant dollar balances invested during each month and throughout the period.

Future performance of the three funds will vary and may be significantly different from the returns shown above. See the "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan" for detailed information about the funds and their investment risks.

Attachment 2

QUESTIONNAIRE
USDA Department of Agriculture
Child Care Subsidy
&
Parent/Teacher Conferences

The Fiscal Year 2001 Treasury Postal Appropriations Bill gives Federal agencies the authority to subsidize the cost of Federal employees' child care expenses. The Office of Personnel Management published regulations in March 2000. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is evaluating the potential use of this authority. As part of this evaluation, USDA must collect data to determine how many employees have a need for child care and those who may need financial assistance. In addition to collecting data for a potential program for child care subsidies, we are soliciting information to determine whether there are any leave-related barriers preventing employees from attending parent teacher conferences. Please complete this questionnaire by **MARCH 30, 2001**. To respond, please fill out the questionnaire and mail to the address shown at the end of the questionnaire.

1. What agency do you work for? _____
2. What is the location of your duty station? _____
(City) and (State)

[CHILD CARE SUBSIDY]

3. Are you a parent (*includes foster parent*) /guardian of a child/children ages 5 and under?

Yes ____ No ____ If Yes, how many? ____

4. Are you a parent (*includes foster parent*) /guardian of a child/children ages 6 to 13?

Yes ____ No ____ If Yes, how many? ____

5. Do you pay for child care for them in a State-licensed program, such as a day care center, family day care, or after-school program?

Yes ____ No ____ If yes, how many? ____

6. If the child/children are not in a State-licensed program, would you move them to a State-licensed program if you received a subsidy for the costs?

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

7. Would you apply for financial assistance to help pay for child care if it were available?

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

8. Total family income will determine eligibility for tuition assistance. What is your total family income as reported as **adjusted gross income** for tax purposes?

0 - \$15,000 _____ \$15,001 - \$25,000 _____

\$25,001 - \$35,000 _____ \$35,001 - \$45,000 _____

\$45,001 - \$55,000 _____ Over \$50,000 _____

9. How many members are in your household? _____

10. How much per month do you currently spend on child care during work hours?
\$ _____

[PARTICIPATION IN PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES]

11. Do you attend parent (*includes foster parent*) /teacher conferences for one or more of your children?

Yes _____ No _____ If yes, check all that is applicable

_____ Pre-School _____ Elementary School
_____ Middle School _____ High School

12. If yes to 11 above, please check how often below:

_____ Once a year _____ Twice a year _____ As requested by Teacher
_____ As requested by Parent

13. Do you take annual leave to attend the conference(s)?

Yes _____ No _____

14. Do you routinely miss parent (*includes foster parent*) teacher conferences because you do not have sufficient annual leave available to attend?

Yes _____ No _____

15. Can the conferences you routinely miss be scheduled after work hours?

Yes _____ No _____

By answering this questionnaire, your needs will be taken into consideration when planning improvements and making changes. Your ideas are very valuable to us!

Mail completed questionnaires to the following address:

USDA/OHRM/SHEW
Room 3027-South Building
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9600

If you have any questions, please contact Constance Smith at 202-720-8386 or Childcaresurvey@usda.gov